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52



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Next week in

**THE SPINECHILLER**  
Collection

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# ATIME TO REAP

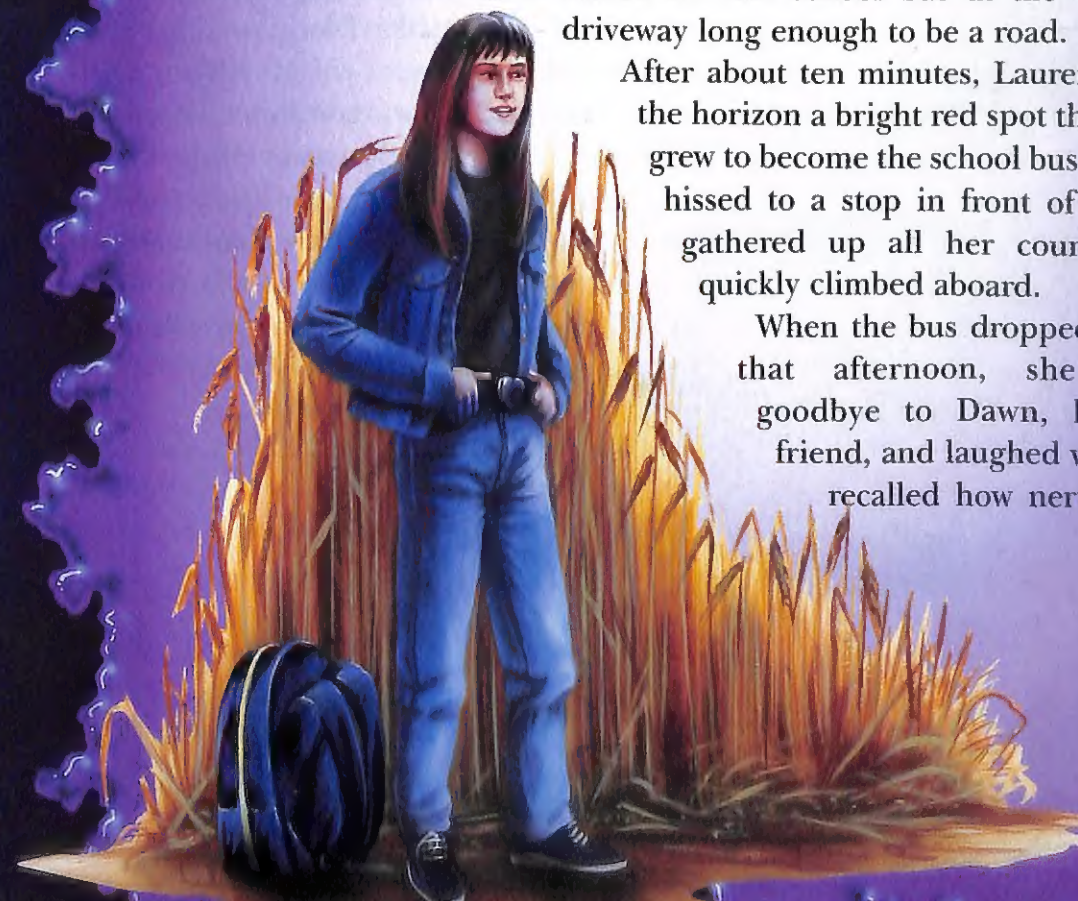


Lauren waited nervously at the end of her long  
driveway for the school bus. This was her first day at  
the new school, and she had no idea what awaited  
her. If they had at least moved to another city, she  
would have had some notion of what to expect. But  
when her father had become the regional sales manager of his  
company, he thought it was the perfect opportunity to "get out  
of the rat race" and move to a village in the countryside. In her  
deepest thoughts, though, Lauren suspected that her dad just  
wanted to be as far away as possible from their home town – the  
place where her mum had died.

That was why he had bought this old farmhouse out in the  
middle of some grain fields. And that was also why Lauren  
now waited for the school bus at the end of a  
driveway long enough to be a road.

After about ten minutes, Lauren saw on  
the horizon a bright red spot that slowly  
grew to become the school bus. When it  
hissed to a stop in front of her, she  
gathered up all her courage and  
quickly climbed aboard.

When the bus dropped her off  
that afternoon, she waved  
goodbye to Dawn, her new  
friend, and laughed when she  
recalled how nervous she





had been. The kids were pretty much the same as kids at her old school – some really nice ones, some prats, and some in between. Dawn, who lived even farther away than Lauren, was just wonderful, and she and Lauren had hit it off right away.



In fact, the next morning Lauren waited almost eagerly to see her new friend, who was sitting right at the back of the bus. Dawn looked happy to see Lauren, too, and motioned for her to sit with her.

"Hi," Lauren said as she lurched to the back and took the seat next to Dawn.

"Hey, I didn't realise where you got off yesterday," Dawn said excitedly. "Do you live on the old Putter farm?"

Lauren shrugged. "I don't know. I live down the road back there."

Dawn nodded emphatically. "Yep. I thought so. That farm used to belong to the Putters."

Lauren shrugged again and smiled. "It may well have done. My dad told me it had been empty for a long time."

"Yeah. They moved out years ago. Do you know why?"

Lauren shook her head.

Dawn leaned closer and lowered her voice. "They had a kid named Daryl. He disappeared one day while he was out playing. They never found all of him."

Lauren narrowed her eyes suspiciously. "What do you mean, 'all of him'?"

"He'd been run over by the automatic combine harvester," Dawn related with great relish. "They found scattered pieces of him all over the field. No one could figure out why he'd been playing so close to such a dangerous machine in the first place – it wasn't like he was a baby who didn't know any better. Anyway, the Putters moved away soon after that."

Lauren frowned, still not quite sure whether Dawn was making up the story. It sounded almost like Dawn was trying to scare her.

"They say," Dawn continued in a near whisper, "that on the anniversary of his death, you can see Daryl's ghost running through the fields, being chased by that old harvester. They say he's looking for the pieces of his body, and until they're all found and buried he'll keep coming back, again and again."

Lauren stared at Dawn for a moment, wondering. Then the effect was broken by Dawn's mouth twitching at the corners, followed suddenly by an explosive fit of giggles. Lauren sighed with relief. "You really had me going there," she said to her friend in mock anger.

Dawn held up a hand. "Actually,

part of it is true. Daryl was run down by the harvester. But the way I see it, anyone stupid enough to play near one of those things deserves what he gets."



When Lauren got home that night, she told her dad what Dawn had said and asked him if he'd heard about Daryl Putter.

"Yes, I was told about the accident," her dad said, shaking his head. "I feel sorry for his family." Then he added with a smile, "But I missed out on hearing about his body pieces scattered around the back fields. That sounds pretty ghastly."

Lauren grinned. "I'm still not so sure about that part myself."

"Well," her dad suggested, "you could find out if it's true by going to the library and searching in old newspapers."

He picked up his magazine and joked, "If there's enough gory stuff maybe you could make it your school project."

"That's gross, Dad," Lauren said, turning back to her homework.

But by the next day, her dad's idea was beginning to make some sense. Her teacher had already announced that there would be some kind of project coming up. Even though Daryl's death wasn't exactly recent news, Lauren had to admit it would probably make an interesting presentation.

So, that Saturday, when Lauren went into town with her dad, she walked over to the library while he was shopping.

"I've just moved into the farmhouse that used to belong to the Putter family," she told the older lady at the information desk,

"and I'm interested in reading any newspaper articles you have got on Daryl Putter's death."

"Oh, yes," the librarian said. "That was truly horrible. What does a nice little girl like you want with such an awful story?"

"Well, I'm interested because I live at their old farm, and... um, my teacher gave it to me for a project."

"She did?" The woman was shocked. "Well, all right. Do you know how to work the microfiche?"

Lauren shook her head. The librarian took her to a desk near the back of the room where a large machine was sitting. "We have kept all the local newspapers going back twenty years, and you can look through all of the national papers going back fifty years."



After teaching Lauren how to operate the machine, the librarian left her to her research, muttering under her breath about the strange projects that teachers gave their students these days.

Lauren thought the local papers would have more information, so she began her search there. To her surprise, Dawn was telling the truth about the way Daryl had died. He went outside one day, and when he hadn't returned by evening, his parents began to worry. Still, it wasn't until daylight that they were able to find him. Or, as Dawn would have put it, "some of him".

Lauren read with a mixture of interest and disgust. Nobody could say why a boy



who had grown up on the farm would be playing around the huge harvester. For a while there was talk of murder, but bloody harvester blades and other evidence overruled those rumours. Within a month after the funeral, the Putters had moved away. Given her dad's reaction to her mother's death, Lauren could fully understand the Putters' decision.

One thing that caught Lauren's attention was the date of the accident. The anniversary was coming up in just over a week. Lauren smiled as an idea took shape in her mind. She would invite Dawn over to spend the night, and the two of them could have a "Daryl-spotting" night! When she told Dawn about the idea, her friend loved it and quickly got permission for the adventure from her parents.



**T**hat weekend Lauren went out to explore the fields surrounding her home, scouting out areas that might be interesting for Dawn and her to check out on "D-night", as they had begun calling it.

Lauren was deep into the high stalks of grain when she stumbled over a piece of rusted metal. "What's this?" she asked herself, bending over to examine the straight piece of metal. It was very heavy and felt like it was attached to something hidden by the plants. Maybe it was part of the harvester, Lauren thought. Hoping to discover something else, she pushed her way through the yellow stalks... then froze in place.

Facing her, as menacingly as a pouncing



tiger, was a huge rusted hulk of metal. It looked a bit like a tractor, with gigantic wheels and a big cab for a driver. But stretched out in front of it like an enormous broom was a long arm of metal. Attached to the arm was a vicious hedge of metal blades.

Lauren felt a chill, as if the sun had suddenly disappeared. "The harvester," she whispered. "It's been sitting out here since the Putters left!"

Slowly walking around the huge machine, Lauren saw that the rubber wheels were cracked and flat, and the window on the cab was caked with grime. Every bit of metal surface was thick with rust. The field had reclaimed its old enemy, and Lauren knew that if she'd walked a few more steps in another direction, she'd never have found it.

"This is perfect," she said, still in a low voice. Taking care to remember where she was, she headed back to her house.

"D-night" arrived, and Dawn came home with Lauren after school. Lauren had not told her friend about finding the

actual harvester that had killed Daryl. She was saving it as a surprise.

After dinner they went up to Lauren's room. Lauren was already prepared and had placed two chairs in front of the window, with a bag of sweets and a pair of binoculars to share between them.

"Are we going to watch from here?" Dawn asked. "I thought you said you had something to show me outside?"

"I do. But I'm guessing that the best time to go outside is around midnight, don't you think?"

Dawn nodded. "Oh, yeah, of course."

"So I got these binoculars from the downstairs cupboard just in case Daryl decides to come out early tonight."

They both giggled and sat down on their chairs. It was a warm, clear night, and the light of the moon outlined the fields in silver. The two girls told each other ghost stories to put themselves in the mood until Lauren's dad knocked on the door and told them it was time to go to sleep.

Lauren and Dawn got ready for bed, then lay in the darkness waiting for

midnight. Finally they heard Lauren's dad go to bed, and the house fell silent.

"How are we going to get outside?" Dawn whispered.

"Remember when I left you in the kitchen for a few minutes while my dad was making dinner?" Lauren whispered back. "I ran outside and propped the ladder against the wall under my window."

"Wow!" Dawn exclaimed. "You think of absolutely everything."

Just before midnight the two girls eased out of their beds and got dressed. Lauren quietly opened the window, then reached outside and lifted up the ladder against the ledge. She swung out and placed her foot on the top rung.

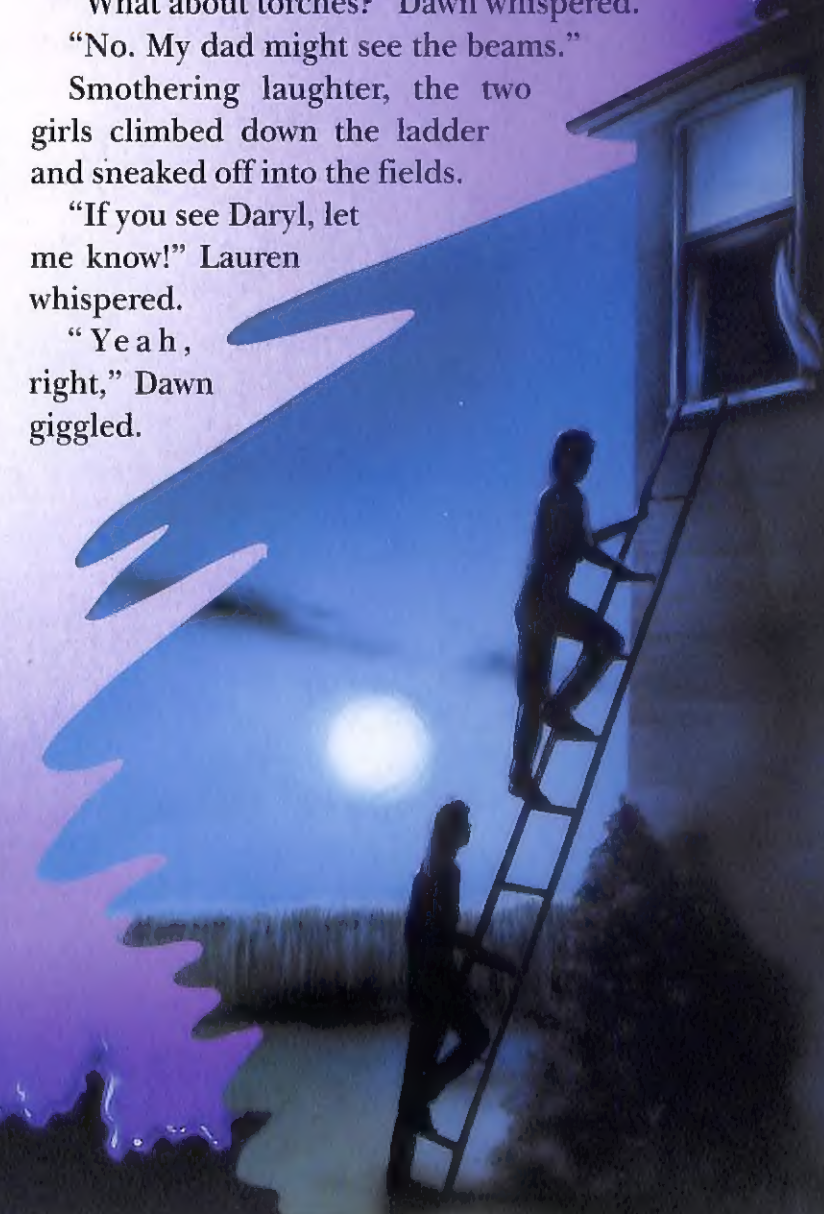
"What about torches?" Dawn whispered.

"No. My dad might see the beams."

Smothering laughter, the two girls climbed down the ladder and sneaked off into the fields.

"If you see Daryl, let me know!" Lauren whispered.

"Yeah, right," Dawn giggled.







he stalks rustled softly against each other as the girls trekked through the field. Lauren led her friend towards the harvester. She couldn't wait to see Dawn's reaction.

After a few minutes, however, she realised with disgust that she couldn't find the stupid thing. She tried not to be obvious, but Dawn soon realised she was up to something.

"What are you looking for?"

Lauren stopped and sighed. "Well, I was going to surprise you, but I can't find it. The harvester that killed Daryl Putter is still out here."

"What? No way!"

"I was out here last weekend and found it," Lauren insisted.

"Did it have blood all over it?" Dawn asked, half serious.

"It was covered with something red," Lauren answered ominously. Then she burst out laughing, "Rust!"

They both giggled, and Lauren gestured to the thick waist-high stalks surrounding them. "I thought I'd remember where it was, but we'll never find it in this stuff."

"Why don't you try walking in a spiral in that direction," Dawn suggested, pointing to her right. "And I'll try this way. Shout if you find something."

Lauren agreed and the two girls split up. Walking in a big spiral, peering into the dark spaces between plants, Lauren was so intent on her search that, at first, she didn't feel the eyes on her. Then, suddenly, she

knew she was being watched. "Dawn!" she said, spinning around. "Stop that!"

But it wasn't Dawn behind her. She saw a small boy, maybe ten years old, who looked normal enough in his jeans and T-shirt. But he had a strange faded look about him – as if the moon were actually shining through him.

Lauren's eyes opened so wide they began to tear. She was having trouble breathing, and her knees were knocking together so hard it hurt.

"Daryl?" she breathed.

The boy just stared at her, then turned suddenly and looked over his shoulder. An expression of pure terror transformed his face, and he shot off through the stalks. At that same moment Lauren heard Dawn scream her name.

"Over here!" Lauren

called with a voice that came out like a croak. She cleared her throat and tried again. "Dawn! I'm over here! Come quick!"

She heard someone crashing through the grain towards her. "Lauren! Lauren!" Dawn screamed.

"Be quiet!" Lauren ordered in a loud whisper. "I'm over here!"

Suddenly Dawn burst into the space where Lauren stood. Her face looked as horrified as Daryl's had been.

"I saw him!" Lauren cried. "I really saw Daryl's ghost!"

Dawn's mouth gaped while she sucked in air. She shook her head forcefully and grabbed at Lauren's arm, much too frightened to speak.

Finally catching her breath, Dawn shouted, "We've got to get out of here!"

"Why?" Lauren demanded, resisting her friend. She grabbed Dawn's arm and yanked her until she stood still on the spot. "He wasn't dangerous."

Dawn's eyes widened in fear. "I saw the machine!" she cried.

"But..." Lauren began. Then an eerie light burst through the stalks around them. She whirled to see the luminous shape of the harvester bearing down on the two of them, its cab as empty as the eye sockets of a skull. And suddenly she knew what Dawn was trying to say.

Daryl wasn't the only ghost in this field. The spirit of the combine harvester that butchered him also hunted once a year – on the anniversary of its first kill.

THE END





## OUR HAUNTED WORLD

Ireland is our next stop,  
so read on for some  
grim and ghostly tales...



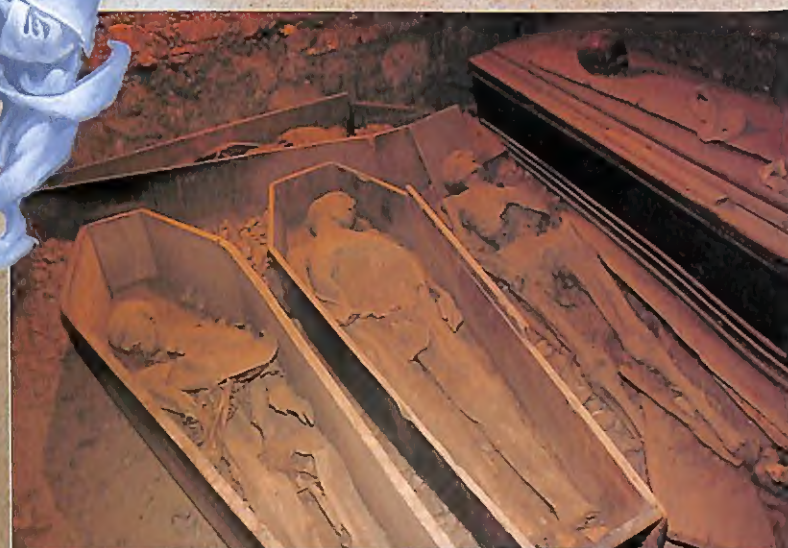
### SPEEDY SLIME

One night in December 1986, a motorist driving to Belderg village came to an unexpected dead end.

A 500-metre stretch of road had literally vanished beneath a slimy peat bog! The bog was over a metre deep and was moving towards the sea. Not only that, local people said that the slime was moving faster than anyone could walk! Some people blamed the recent heavy rainfall. But this region of Ireland is always wet, so why should a vast area of peat suddenly take off down the road? It's unlikely that anyone will ever know for certain.

### WHERE THE ROT NEVER SETS IN

The Church of St Michan, in Dublin, is on the site of a former 11th-century Danish church. Its dark vaults contain a chilling secret – a collection of centuries-old mummies (see above)! The skin on the corpses is brown with age but still as soft as living, breathing flesh! Normally, bodies start to rot immediately after death – a fact well understood by the 'mummy experts' of Ancient Egypt. But the mysteriously dry atmosphere of the ancient vaults of St Michan must have somehow stopped them decomposing over hundreds of years!



### THE CURSING STONES

On the island of Inishmurray, off the coast of Sligo, there is a spooky custom: if you wish to put a curse on someone who has done you harm, you turn over a 'cursing stone' on the ancient stone altar shown above. Woe betide you if you try to curse someone unfairly.

If you do, the curse will come back on you! During World War II, an English woman went to the island especially to turn a stone against Adolf Hitler. The terrifying Nazi leader was eventually defeated – and who is to say that the cursing stones didn't play their part in his downfall?



### THE GHOSTLY BOATMAN

In 1926, estate-owner Anna Godley, from Killegar in County Leitrim, and her steward went to visit Bowes, one of her workers who had been ill for some time. When Miss Godley arrived at Bowes' cottage, she spoke to him through the open window, where he was sitting up in bed. Bowes told her he was very sick and that he needed a doctor. Miss Godley rushed home with her steward to get help.

Their route back took them alongside a lake, where the steward asked Miss Godley if she could see a man on the water. She looked up and saw an old man with a billowing white beard, who appeared to be punting a boat – except that there was no boat! They watched him cross the wide lake and, as he did so, agreed that he looked just like Bowes. When she arrived home, Miss Godley was informed that Bowes had died just a few minutes earlier – at the moment they spotted the man on the lake. Miss Godley and her steward believed that what they had just witnessed was Bowes' ghost visiting his old lake-side haunts in his boat before leaving the world.



# FATE'S FICKLE FINGERS



**1** When Mrs Malone's husband died, she bought a Doberman puppy. Buster soon became her best friend and faithful guard dog.



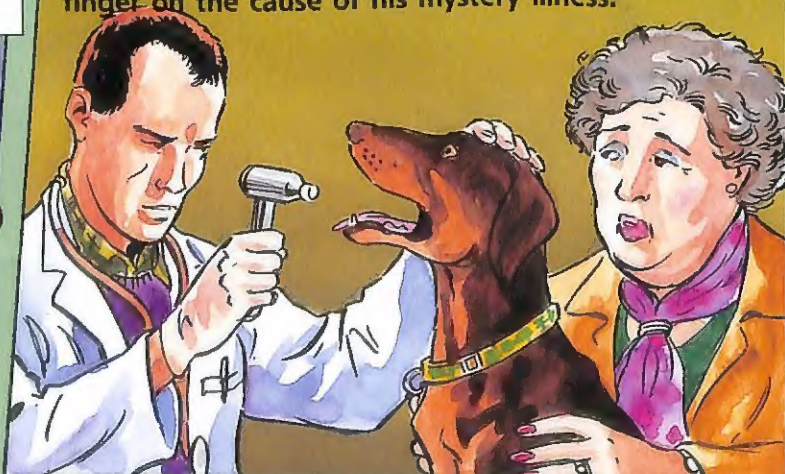
**2** One day, when she returned from the shops, she found Buster choking in the doorway.



**3** Frantic, she hauled Buster into the car and whizzed him to the vet.



**4** The vet gave Buster a thorough examination but couldn't quite put his finger on the cause of his mystery illness.



**5** Mrs Malone went home and sat anxiously by the telephone. An hour later, the vet rang...



Buster is fine – but you must go to your neighbour's right now! Call the police from there. I'll explain everything when I see you!



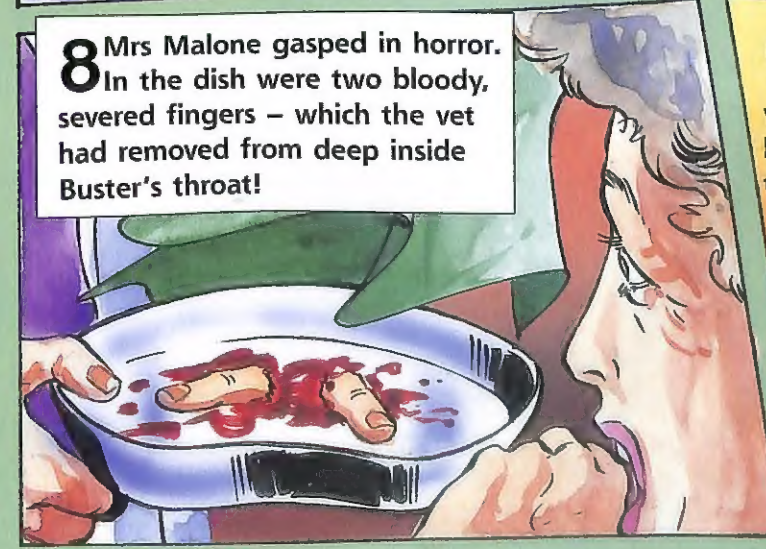
**6** Mrs Malone did as he asked. Minutes later, she saw the police go into her home – just as the vet's car drew up.



**7** The vet held out a covered dish, saying that its contents would explain his phone call.



**8** Mrs Malone gasped in horror. In the dish were two bloody, severed fingers – which the vet had removed from deep inside Buster's throat!



**9** The police found a terrified burglar hiding in Mrs Malone's wardrobe, trying to bandage his bleeding hand – from which two fingers were missing!







# ANASTASIA

**Special Investigation File: 52**

**Subject: the mysterious 'death' of a young Russian princess**  
**Place: Russia and Germany**

SpineChiller creates a file

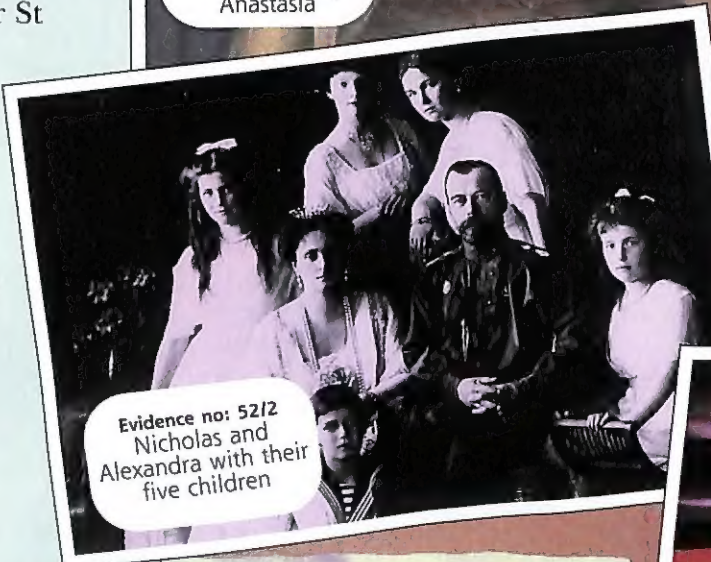
## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1917, a revolution occurred in Russia and Communists took over the government. The country's former royal ruler, Tsar Nicholas II, abdicated. Then he, his wife Alexandra and their five children were imprisoned. Their first 'prison' was a palace near St Petersburg, the Russian capital at that time. A few months later, they were taken to icy Siberia. Finally, in April 1918, they were moved to the town of Ekaterinburg in the Ural Mountains.

On July 17, 1918, the family disappeared. At first Communists claimed to have shot Nicholas but spared his wife and children. Later they said they had executed the whole family. However, rumours spread that all its members were still alive but in hiding. Then, in 1922, an amazing story broke in Berlin. Reports stated that Anastasia, Nicholas and Alexandra's youngest daughter, was in the city.



Evidence no: 52/1  
Grand Duchess  
Anastasia



Evidence no: 52/2  
Nicholas and  
Alexandra with their  
five children

August 20, 1922

Dear Hannelore

Do you remember when, two years ago, a woman called Anna Tchaikovski was pulled from the Berlin canal after a suicide attempt? Well, now she has told friends she is Grand Duchess Anastasia of Russia.

The woman claims that she was shot with the rest of the imperial family. However, she apparently did not die but was smuggled to Romania, then Berlin. There she became so miserable that she jumped into the canal.

I wonder if this story is true, or if 'Anastasia' just wants to get her hands on the imperial fortune.

Your friend,  
Ingrid



Evidence no: 52/3  
An illustration showing the  
Ekaterinburg executions

## 1977 IMPERIAL IMPOSTOR?

Our reporter looks back on the twists and turns of the Anastasia case.

Anna Tchaikovski, later known as Anna Anderson, first said she was Anastasia more than 40 years ago. Many people have since accepted her claim – but just as many have rejected it. In 1933, the tsar's fortune was divided between six family members. Anna was not among them. Then, in 1938, German lawyers began their long fight to obtain her share.

The case continued off and on in Germany for years. Many wealthy witnesses gave evidence – the legal records filled 8000 pages. But in 1970, Anna's case was thrown out. Earlier this year, she withdrew from the legal battle. But she has not abandoned her claim to be Anastasia.

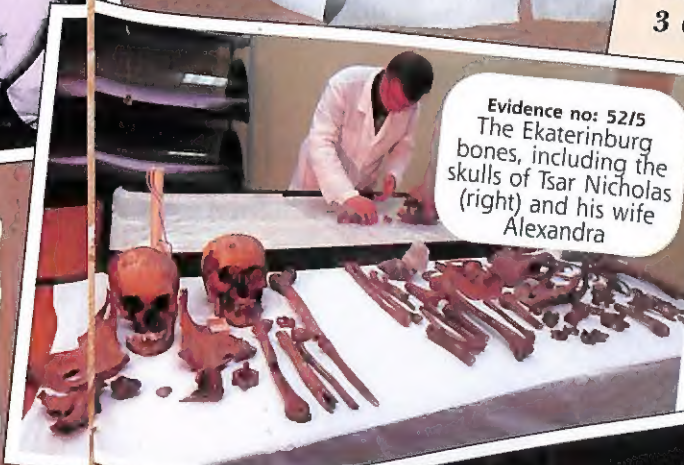


Evidence no: 52/4  
'Anastasia' in  
October 1976

## SKELETON SURVEY

Following is the information you requested about the skeletons that were unearthed in Ekaterinburg, Russia in 1991.

- 1 The human bones – nine skeletons – were dug up from a grave just outside the town. It was first discovered in 1989.
- 2 Bones from the grave were tested in Russia, Britain and the USA. Then DNA samples from them were compared with DNA from relatives of the Russian royal family, including members of British royalty such as Prince Michael of Kent.
- 3 Clothing and other material found at the burial site were also examined.
- 4 Researchers eventually concluded that the grave had contained the bones of Tsar Nicholas II, his wife Alexandra, three of their children – Anastasia, Tatiana and Olga – their doctor and three of their servants.



Evidence no: 52/5  
The Ekaterinburg  
bones, including the  
skulls of Tsar Nicholas  
(right) and his wife  
Alexandra



Evidence no: 52/6  
The burial of the  
Ekaterinburg skeletons  
in St Petersburg

## CONCLUSION

The bones were buried in St Peter and Paul Cathedral, St Petersburg, on July 17, 1998, exactly 80 years after Anastasia and her family were shot. But the skeletons of Alexei and Maria, the tsar's other two children, were still missing. In late 1998, archaeologists found what may be their bones in a wood near Ekaterinburg. DNA tests will show beyond doubt if they really are.

Unexplained



CLASSIC



SERIAL

Chapter 1

# Dracula

Retold from a story by Bram Stoker

## Jonathan Harker's Diary

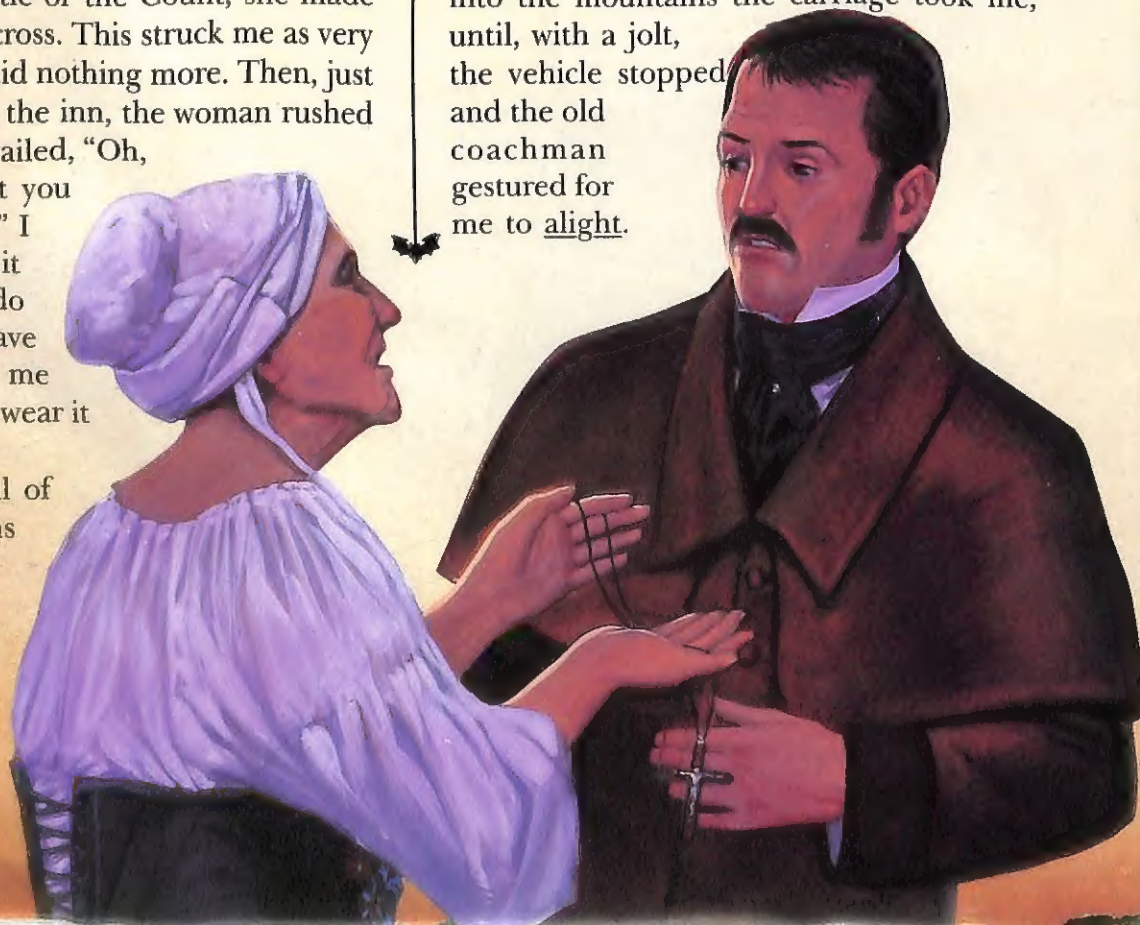
Transylvania was unlike any place I, Jonathan Harker, had ever visited. The wild scenery was fascinating, the costumes of the people extremely strange. I had not wanted to leave Mina, my beloved bride-to-be, but my employer, Mr Hawkins, had insisted that I go. My task was to advise a wealthy foreign aristocrat about a house we had found for him in England. I endured a long, uneventful journey before arriving in the town of Bistritz. This was the town nearest to Castle Dracula, home of Count Dracula, the gentleman I was to see.

When I asked my landlady whether she knew of the castle or the Count, she made the sign of the cross. This struck me as very strange, but I said nothing more. Then, just as I was leaving the inn, the woman rushed out to me and wailed, "Oh, young Sir, must you really go there?" I explained that it was my job to do so. She then gave her crucifix to me and said I must wear it about my neck.

Following all of the instructions that the Count had sent me in a letter, I took a public coach

to a place high in the mountains that was called the Borgo Pass. There I was to await the arrival of the Count's personal carriage. What strange people my fellow passengers were! When I mentioned my destination, they all shrank back in fear. Several made the sign of the cross and one gave me a bulb of garlic. I did not wish to appear rude, so I accepted the puzzling gift with a smile.

The Count's coach came for me as arranged. The driver was a fierce-looking fellow and he whipped the horses hard so that the carriage flew through the gloom of the night. Up and up, higher and higher into the mountains the carriage took me, until, with a jolt, the vehicle stopped and the old coachman gestured for me to alight.



I looked round and spied a dark castle, its towers shrouded in a ghostly mist. Whether it was the sight of the castle or the distant howling of wolves I do not know, but I began to shiver.

The coach disappeared into the shadows and I knocked on the dark castle door. There was a rattling of chains and a clanking of bolts before the door opened to reveal a tall man. He looked very distinguished and was dressed in black from head to toe. "Welcome to my house, young Mr Harker," the man said, as he beckoned me to come inside.

I entered, then jumped a little as I shook the man's hand – it was as cold as ice. When the man withdrew his hand, with its long sharpened nails like cat's claws, he smiled. "So delighted to meet you in the flesh," he exclaimed, carefully closing and locking the door. Count Dracula led me through the silent, poorly lit castle and into the dining room. I noticed how deathly white his face looked and how two of his upper teeth stuck out from his cruel smile to rest on his bottom lip. But these thoughts were soon forgotten as I settled down to a most excellent dinner.

The Count stood by a grand stone fireplace as I ate and explained that he had feasted earlier. As he refilled my glass with a magnificent wine, I could not help recoiling from his terrible breath. It had about it the smell of death. The Count noticed my disgust and quickly stepped back. Then he appeared to listen hard to the howling of a pack of wolves outside the castle.

"Ah, the children of the night. What sweet music!" he cried, with a smile. I tried to smile back, but my face seemed frozen with the unease that I felt.

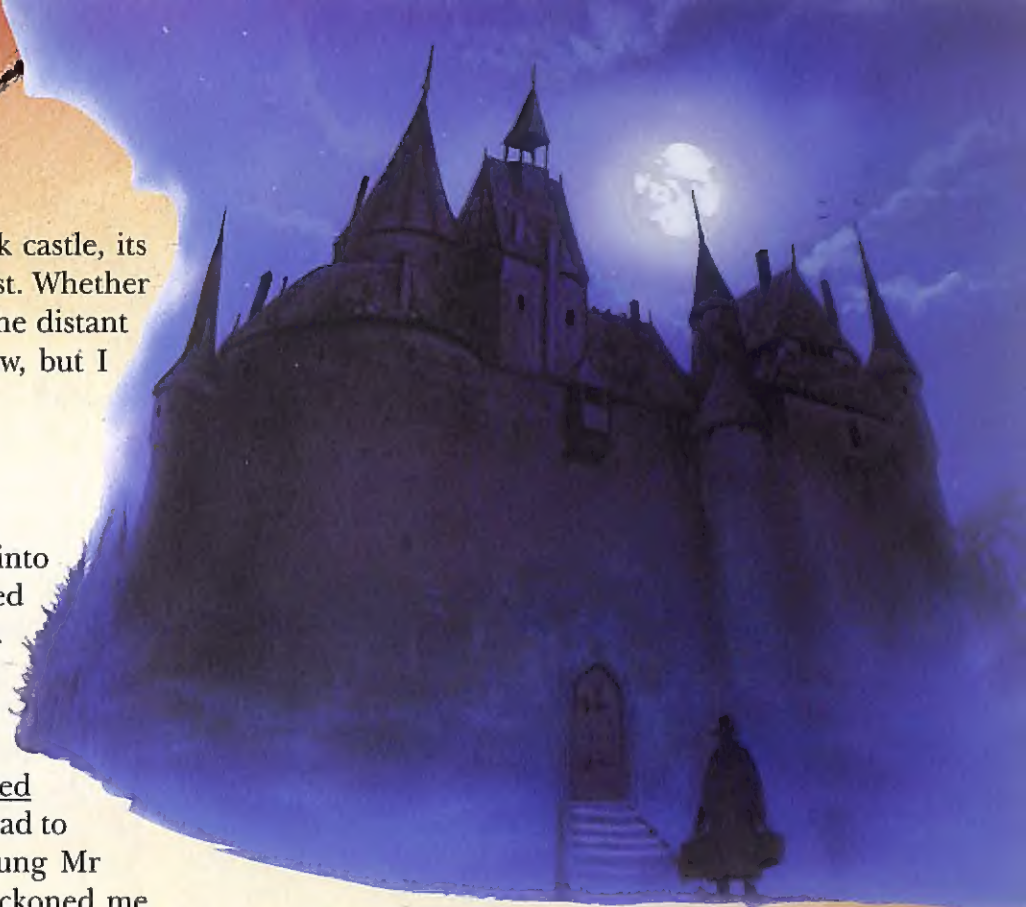
Next, Count Dracula explained that he would not be around until the evening on the following day. "Please make yourself at home and go anywhere in the castle," he said. But then he paused before adding mysteriously, "Except for the rooms that are locked. They are so for good reason."

The next day I rested, checked the papers relating to the house that the Count was buying, and awaited my host's return. It was late evening when he arrived. Again he refused to join me for dinner, insisting that he had eaten earlier.

The Count told me how he had longed to visit London for some time. "I dream of losing myself in its crowded streets, surrounded by its teeming millions. You see, everyone here knows me and who I am. I dream of being a stranger in a strange land. It's the only way for me to be free. Now Mr Harker, tell me about Carfax, this lovely old house that you have for me. Both the name and the place intrigue me."

The Count quizzed me hard. He wanted to know every single detail. I was nervous.

Underlined words are explained in WORD POWER.





Carfax was a mansion east of London. It had potential, but its lands included a church and graveyard, and its location next to a mental asylum would have put off many clients. Yet, as I told Count Dracula of these facts, he seemed pleased. "To be near the mad and the dead suits me, Mr Harker," I can clearly remember him saying.

After dinner, we went to the Count's library and talked for many hours until the first pale hints of sunrise could be spied outside the window. Then Count Dracula quickly jumped up and said, "Ah, it's nearly morning. I have kept you up all night, Mr Harker. Please forgive me and sleep as long as you want. I will be out until the evening."

The Count left and I went to my room. I slept soundly through most of the next day and awoke in the early evening. I then decided to shave.

There was no mirror in my room, but I had brought along a tiny one that my dear Mina had given to me as a present. I had just started shaving when an icy hand touched me on the shoulder and a voice

## WORD POWER

crucifix – a model of Jesus Christ on a cross, sometimes worn as a necklace

alight – descend from or leave a vehicle

distinguished – noble; aristocratic

recoiling – pulling back; withdrawing

potential – ability to become, but not yet being, something good

lair – an animal's den, often hidden or underground

predicament – an extremely difficult or dangerous situation

said, "Good evening, Mr Harker." The voice was unmistakable – it was the Count.

Amazingly, no reflection of my host appeared in the mirror. As I realised this, I jumped. My razor nicked my cheek and I felt a tiny drop of blood trickle down it. Then I whirled round to spy the Count, who was now standing several paces away. He seemed his usual self until he spotted

the blood. Then his eyes blazed with an animal fury and his arms sprung towards my neck.

As Count Dracula's pointed nails dug into my throat, his hands felt the landlady's cross that still hung there. At this, the Count drew back sharply and began to circle me warily, his eyes cleansed of the wildness that I had seen a moment earlier.

"Please try not to cut yourself. It is dangerous around here," he muttered as he grabbed my mirror and tossed it out of the castle window. Then he left my room without saying another word. A cold chill ran up and down my spine. Why had I not seen him in the mirror?

After another evening of questions, my work at Castle Dracula was complete. However, my peculiar host seemed unwilling to let me leave. Finally, he ordered me to write to my employer saying that I would be needed in Transylvania for a further 30 days. Another month! My heart sank as the Count uttered those words. I felt forced to stay with this strange man in his unpleasant lair, many miles from civilisation.

During the days, when the Count was not around, I explored the castle at length. All the doors leading to the outside were locked. Several doors to rooms inside the castle were also barred. There appeared to be no way out. I was completely trapped, and when I realised this, I felt the rage of a madman overcome me. What did Count Dracula plan to do with me?

My mood improved when some gypsy workmen arrived one afternoon. The Count was nowhere to be seen as these men unloaded a stack of long wooden boxes from their horse-drawn carts. I tried to ask them to let me out of the castle. However they did not speak English, so could not

understand and simply smiled in response.

Then I decided on another course of action. I quickly wrote a note to Mina in shorthand and threw it down right in front of the men, together with some coins. The gypsies understood this desperate request and signalled that they would post my letter. I was pleased, thinking that if Mina at least knew of my terrible predicament, she might be able to organise some help, perhaps even rescue me from my castle prison.

As night fell and Count Dracula did not appear, my feeling of helplessness returned. Looking around for a method of escape, I gazed out of my window and spied an incredible sight. It was the Count climbing up a steep castle wall with supernatural ease. Once inside, he made his way back down the wall as if he were some giant, bat-like creature. I was absolutely terrified. Was I imagining things? Had this awful place started to drive me mad? Or was the Count even stranger than I had suspected?





# PLANT POWER

Do you believe that if you talk nicely to your plants they will thrive and grow? Many people do – even members of the British royal family!

But could you believe that your favourite pot plant is a mind-reader or that the trees are busily engaged in conversation? Read on for some bizarre claims!



▲ **HOUSE PLANT HORROR**  
In the film 'Little Shop of Horrors', workers in a flower shop are attacked by a man-eating plant.

**ALL WIRED UP**  
Some extraordinary tests were carried out on plants during the 1960s by a man called Cleve Backster – a former CIA employee who was an expert in the use of the lie detector. On an impulse, Backster decided to connect a house plant to a lie detector to see what happened when he watered the plant. He expected the levels of electricity to rise as the plant drew the water up its roots, but in fact the measurements dropped, a sure sign in humans that they are happy and relaxed!

**MIND GAMES**  
Puzzled by this turn of events, Backster wondered to himself what would happen if he were to harm the plant by setting one of its leaves on fire. Unbelievably, at that very moment, the lie detector graph jumped! Backster left the room and returned with some matches, at which point the measurement jumped again! This poor plant definitely seemed upset. But not only did it appear to show emotions, it seemed to be psychic as well! It apparently knew what Backster was planning when it was still just a thought.



▲ **A TRULY SENSITIVE CREATURE**  
This sensitive plant reacts to touch (centre) by changing its leaves from an open appearance (top left) to a folded, stressed appearance (right) in a matter of seconds.



## LINE UP

Backster was so impressed by this initial result that he continued his experiments. On one occasion, he asked a group of students to pick papers out of a hat. One paper instructed a student to enter the laboratory secretly and destroy one of two house plants. The surviving plant was then wired to the lie detector and the students were paraded past it individually. When the guilty plant-destroyer came into the room, the surviving plant showed severely disturbed emotions on the lie detector.

Backster even persuaded a local police squad to walk murder suspects past a wired plant that had been at the scene of the crime! No one was charged!

## ► NATURAL MYSTIC

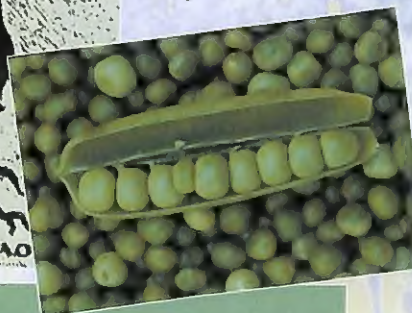
Young women make offerings at a sacred Shiva-tree in southern India. Shiva is the goddess of destiny.



## PLANT PARAPHERNALIA

For many centuries, plants were believed to have magical powers. Here are just a few superstitions surrounding plants:

- 1 Legend has it that a demon lives in the mandrake plant (above left), because its roots look so human! In ancient times, people got their dogs to pull the roots up. The scream of the demon plant being pulled from the earth was supposedly enough to drive humans mad!
- 2 One pea in a pod or nine perfect peas (above right) are considered good luck. If a single girl puts the pod above the front door, she'll marry the first man to cross the threshold.
- 3 Flowering beans can bring all sorts of bad luck. Miners in the north of England believed pit accidents were most likely at the time of year when this happened as the souls of the dead lived in the flowers. And the scent was thought to bring bad dreams, hallucinations and even madness!



## TALKING TREES

Ancient cultures – and some modern ones too – believe that supernatural spirits live in trees. And if that sounds far-fetched, what about the claims by some modern scientists that trees can talk among themselves?

To try to prove it, scientists conducted an experiment. They introduced caterpillars on to a group of willow trees, leaving another group of trees clear. The caterpillars attacked the trees and, in response, the trees began producing a chemical that worked as a natural pesticide, limiting the damage the caterpillars caused. A few weeks later, the scientists were thrilled to discover that the trees with no caterpillars on them were also producing this chemical. They declared the experiment a success and concluded that the caterpillar-infested trees alerted all the others!

But exactly how did this communication take place? One theory is that the trees' leaves produced pheromones that became airborne and communicated the danger, but conclusive proof is still needed. It seems that talking trees may not be such a tall story, after all!



# INTO THE FUTURE PUZZLES

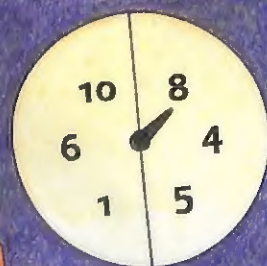
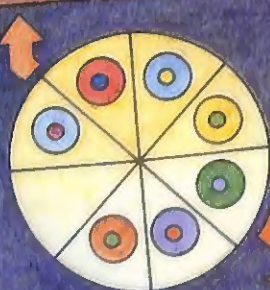
## WHO'S IN CHARGE?

Can you work out whose headquarters this building is? The people who work here have to check who is coming and going from space. Another clue is just below.

PATROL

## CIRCULAR CIRCUITS

One section of the control dial (below left) is empty. The spacecraft will crash if you don't fill it in the next two minutes. Which symbol is the right one: A, B, C or D?



## SIGN OF THE TIMES

Magnetic forces from outer space have jumbled the numbers on the control panel clock (left). Luckily they are still arranged to a formula. Can you work out what it is?

## FANTASTIC FACTS

Scientists all over the world are working on developing a microchip that will be able to upload (improve) a person's memory. This chip will not just upload what a person thinks, but will enhance emotions, sights, sounds and imagination, apparently! It is likely that this microchip will in fact be a group of chips: one to record each sense's input. British Telecom's chip is called the 2025 chip because there is a good chance that it could be ready by that year.

PYRAMID PUZZLE  
How many triangles are there on the front of this building?

## FUTURE FACTS

British Telecom and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have already held the first virtual reality teleconference. Those taking part talked and moved as if they were in the same room, although they were really halfway across the world from each other! In the future, children may not even need to go to school. They will be able to join their classmates in a virtual reality environment at home!



## CAB LANDING

These spacecab drivers are buzzing passengers round cities in space. They all want to land on the best pad, Helipad 17. But only one can. Which cab is it?

## LIFT OFF!

Can you move from STAR to MOON faster than the lift can reach the top floor? You can adjust only one letter when you reach each floor to make a new word.

## FAR-OUT FACTS

Living in space is more than just a dream. Plans for a new International Space Station are already under way. Research is being conducted by the Mir space station, which has been in Earth's orbit for 11 years! Wendell Mendell, a planetary scientist from NASA, believes that in 20 years time thousands of people will be living in space. He also predicts that Earth will become too crowded, so space cities will be built!

## FAST FACTS

Inside the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York State, USA, scientists are working on the machine of the future. It is called the Lightcraft and will be powered by microwaves from satellites in space. When the machine gets going, it will be able to travel at 25 times the speed of sound. There will be no need for airports, bus stops or train stations. The Lightcraft will simply hover above your home and lift you inside by means of the electromagnetic field it generates. Passengers will have to wear belts with magnets in them for the system to work.

## ANSWERS

WHO'S IN CHARGE?: Border Patrol (the border is surrounding PATROL)  
CIRCULAR CIRCUITS: The answer is D. The inner colour in one segment becomes the outer colour in the next, going clockwise.  
SIGN OF THE TIMES: The formula is that each side of the clock adds up to 17.  
PYRAMID PUZZLE: There are 14 triangles in total.  
CAB LANDING: The answer is 98. It is the only one whose numbers, when added together, make 17.  
LIFT OFF: The words on each floor should be: STAR, SPAR, SPUR, SOUR, POUR, POOR, MOOR, MOON.